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thieves. When I first went to Barrendowen I tried kindness, I showed them how they might have flocks, &c. of their own to feed upon, and gave them presents, but all in vain. They are a restless race, never remaining above a day or two in one place, except when planning some expedition against a hostile tribe, or to rob the white man. When they are bent on an act of murder and robbery they assume towards their intended victims a manner of great kindness; two of my poor herdsmen were murdered by the very men who had been associating with them and helping them only the very day before in fishing, in all apparent simplicity and kindness. In fact, I have now ascertained that when the natives are seemingly the most friendly they are meditating some act of treachery. To conclude, as far as experience yet goes, I should say the native Australian is, like the brute, incapable of forethought; and in no instance that I have heard, have they attempted to add to the comfort of existence by building huts, or by rearing herds of cattle or sheep, &c. They kill all within their reach, and thence move to another ground. Whether they ever will be brought into a state of civilization I have doubts: in my opinion, the only hope there is must arise from some bold missionary who dares venture to live amongst them, as Bracefelt and Davis did. Such a sacrifice on the part of an educated man is almost beyond hope.

X.—*Extract of a Report of Mr. John Edward Eyre to Governor Grey, dated Moorunde, 20th January, 1844, containing a Notice of the lower Course of the River Darling.* Communicated by Lord STANLEY.

THE European population settled upon the Murray River, though at present somewhat limited in number, is, I am happy to say, gradually increasing, and during the ensuing year I have hopes that several new settlers may locate themselves in a district which only requires to be better known to be more appreciated. One very considerable cause of distrust on the part of those wishing to settle upon the Murray arises from the ill success or losses that have hitherto attended all agricultural attempts yet made there. These have had two causes. In the year 1842 the fall of rain at the Murray was so slight, compared with that which fell around Adelaide, that an impression went generally abroad that no rain ever fell in so level a region, or at least not sufficient for the purpose of the husbandman. The past year of 1843 has fully proved the error of so hasty an assumption, and an abundance of rain fell during the usual seasons for wet; the crops prospered and grew luxuriantly, when another evil appeared and again de-

prived the farmer of his expected harvest. This arose from the unusually high state to which the Murray rose during the months of September, October, and November. From previous experience it had been apparent that the river rose periodically several feet, and usually overflowed many of the alluvial flats lying between the bank of the river and the fossil cliffs. Considerable labour and some expense were bestowed in damming up the passages by which the water escaped from the river to the lower levels, and in digging canals for the purpose of irrigation; these were completely successful as long as the river did not attain a greater height than it had risen to in 1841 and 1842; but upon its rising several feet beyond this level, there were of course no impediments to its progress: the dams and ditches were all destroyed, and the whole expanse of alluvial flats were again laid under water, in some places fully six feet deep, and of course all cultivation was completely annihilated by the ravages of the flood. So unfortunate a termination to a second year's labour has certainly been disheartening, and I fear has led to the erroneous idea that it is impossible to keep out these destructive inundations. The ensuing year will, I trust, however, see these difficulties fully conquered, and embankments thrown up at all the openings through the river's bank, so as effectually to block out the highest flood, at the same time that a few shallow ditches cut around those lands intended for cultivation will afford the important, and in Australia almost unknown, power of completely irrigating at pleasure all such lands. Thus what has been inconsiderately deemed an insuperable objection to the valley of the Murray, will, I believe, eventually prove to be its highest recommendation. In a future report (not having the documents now by me) I shall have much pleasure in forwarding to his Excellency the Governor some tables of the fall of rain at the Murray during the years 1842 and 1843, also of the rising and falling of the river, its highest and lowest levels, and the periods at which such changes appear usually to take place. I may here however remark that, during my residence at the Murray, I have never known any sudden rise in its waters to occur, so that the flood never comes unawares upon the settler: the change of level seldom exceeds an inch or two in a day, unless very strong southerly winds have driven the water back, and retarded the ordinary current; then, perhaps, as much as six or seven inches rise may have taken place; but even in these cases the water again recedes as soon as the wind changes or lulls. The falling of the river appears to be as gradual as its rise.

With respect to the aborigines, I am happy to say that no disturbances whatever have occurred in the district under my charge. A few trifling petty thefts have sometimes taken place, but no

serious offences either against the persons or property of Europeans. Among the natives themselves I have sometimes been called upon to afford protection or redress to the helpless or the injured.

During the past year I have been obliged to make some considerable deviation from my former system of issuing flour at the full of every moon to all natives indiscriminately who chose to assemble to receive it. This change was rendered necessary in consequence of the great number of natives that assembled (from 300 to 400, in the early part of 1843), and in order to prevent the tribes of my neighbourhood from visiting Adelaide, where they were very troublesome to Europeans, and greatly interfered with the Adelaide natives.

In disregard, however, of all my requests and injunctions to the contrary, several of the tribes still persisted in deserting their own district and crowding into town. Upon their return again to the Murray it became necessary to fulfil the threat I had held out to them, and stop that monthly issue of flour which hitherto they had regularly received. This punishment was principally confined to the tribes very near Moorunde, or a little to the south of it, as I still continued the usual issue to all those who had been well behaved and had attended to my requests. During the ensuing year I would still propose to adhere to my present arrangement. It appears to me that, unless the Government can afford to supply a sufficient quantity of flour for all natives who may come, and which would amount at the least to six tons annually, that it will be better to present it only to the more distant tribes when they visit us, and to such of our own immediate families as may be deserving of it for their good conduct, or for their quietly residing in their own district.

It remains for me to give a slight outline to his Excellency of a recent journey made by me up the Murray to the Darling, with the fourfold object of cementing the good understanding existing between the distant tribes and Europeans; of learning whether any of the parties said to be on their route from Sydney overland, with stock, were actually approaching the boundary of South Australia; of determining, as far as might be, the cause of the unusually high flood in the Murray this year, by ascertaining whether it came down through the channel of the Murray or the Darling; and, finally, of investigating the probability or otherwise of a route to the interior by the ranges near Mount Lyall.

On the 4th December I left Moorunde with a party consisting of Mr. Scott, one policeman, and a native of Moorunde: in all we were three Europeans and a native, each mounted, and one pack-horse carrying provisions. Proceeding up the right bank of the Murray, we arrived at the Rufus on the 8th December, and

delayed there a day, to enable me to get a Rufus native to accompany the party, as I found my Moorunde black did not understand the language of the Darling. Guided by our new conductor, we struck across through the scrub to the Darling, crossing a large anabranh of that river, running through the scrub half way between Lake Victoria and the Darling, with a course of fully 60 miles, nearly parallel to the latter river. In this we obtained water where we struck it; but farther north, as we afterwards found, it was quite dry, owing to the rise that had taken place this year in the waters of the Darling being so slight. To the southward the quantity of water increased gradually until it joined the Murray lagoons; and upon our return, when we struck it lower down, we were obliged to swim our horses across it. This singular watercourse forms in times of flood another connecting channel between the Darling and the Murray, leaving an immense desert island of low or scrubby lands between it and the Darling. When the Darling is flooded this channel is filled, but when only the Murray has risen, as was now the case, the back waters from that river do not reach so far up as where we first struck the lagoon: a great part of its course is marked by lines of the river gum-trees.

Early on the 12th December, we struck the Darling upwards of 70 miles above its junction with the Murray, and now found that it had been but very slightly flooded this year: its waters, though muddy, were fast receding, nor did there appear to have been a greater rise than three feet this season. In many places the river was shallow and easily fordable, presenting, from the strong contrast of an apparently very small body of water with a deep, wide, muddy channel, an idea of insignificancy not justly due to a river having so long a course. In many places, however, the actual width of the water could not be 15 yards, and fallen trees frequently obstructed the channel nearly quite across. To compensate however for this, the banks of the river were lined with most beautiful gum-trees, gracefully overhanging, and with a wide-spreading dense foliage to the very ground. I have nowhere seen in Australia so pleasing or picturesque an effect produced by the eucalypti as was the case along the whole course of the Darling.

After travelling 55 miles up the Darling from the point where we first struck it, we reached a clear deep channel on the west bank, and which was evidently a very considerable anabranh of the Darling in times of flood, its channel exactly resembling that of the river itself in character, with deep muddy banks, and the strata distinctly marked in narrow horizontal lines. This large anabranh occurred at that bend of the Darling where the river turns from a south-westerly to a nearly south course; but I regret

I had no instrument with me to determine its exact latitude. Proceeding four miles further north we had a fine view of the ranges laid down by Major Mitchell to the west of the Darling. From our position, the most southerly point of these ranges bore N. 42° W., and the intervening country appeared low, and for the most part subject to inundation. A very high distant peak, visible only with the telescope, bore N. 14° W., and I thought it might be Mount Lyall, but the day was too hazy to determine with certainty. I was now almost within reach of the point I wished to visit when unfortunately circumstances compelled me to return. My health, which for three months previously had been very bad, was now daily getting worse; a cold caught one wet night in the beginning of the journey caused a relapse of my complaint, until at last I could hardly keep my seat upon horseback at all. With much pain, therefore, I was compelled to leave unaccomplished one of the principal objects I had in view when I set out, and on the 15th December I reluctantly turned back to make the best of my way home again. Proceeding down the Darling on our return until within a short distance of its junction with the Murray, we went over all that part of the river's course left unvisited by Major Mitchell, and thus connected the two lines of that traveller, only on the opposite side of the river to that on which his track lies. I was anxious before I turned back, if possible, to have determined our position more nearly by reaching the creek laid down as 'Laidley's chain of Ponds,' but though within so few miles of it, I was too ill to attempt to proceed further. The natives described this creek as a chain of ponds or sheets of water, connected by a running stream, and falling into the Darling at a place called 'Weēl-yu-rārah:' they said it came from the hills I had seen, and told me that water was to be found all the way from the Darling to Mount Bryan under these hills, by which route the natives frequently crossed backwards and forwards, though chiefly, I apprehend, in the winter season.

In the brief outline I have just given of my late interesting excursion, his Excellency will at once notice the very beneficial influence exercised among the natives by the Government establishment at Moorunde, and which extends in a greater or less degree to the farthest point we reached, or about 330 miles distant from Moorunde by our line of route. We continually met with large bodies of natives along our whole course, especially on the Darling; we had them frequently encamped close to us, and yet never felt it necessary to keep watch at night, nor did the natives annoy or harass us in any way; in fact it would have been impossible for us to pass through them on better terms, or in a more friendly manner.

In passing up the river I occasionally met with old acquaint-

ances, and sometimes with one or two individuals who had even been down to Moorunde; and at the very furthest point reached, I heard of two natives having crossed thence from Mount Bryan, after receiving blankets from me at Moorunde at the last May issue.

In concluding my Report I would fain hope that if no other good has been accomplished by our hurried and harassing journey, at least the way has been opened for a future expedition to travel with ease and safety and on friendly terms with the natives. The fact of so small a party as three Europeans and a native passing on such good terms among the very numerous tribes of the Darling, once considered so hostile, may, I think, fairly warrant my drawing such a conclusion; at all events, I shall be most happy to make the attempt during the ensuing winter if no other occupation interferes, and if His Excellency will provide me with the equipment necessary to take the field for a couple of months. That time would, I think, suffice for tracing up "Laidley's Ponds," and for examining the whole of the ranges near Mount Lyall, in order to determine the probability or otherwise of a route being found under them leading to a better tract of country inland. I confess my own impressions are unfavourable to such an opinion; but still the exploration would be interesting, and would decide the character of the only part of the southern portion of this continent upon which even the slightest doubt remains. I may remark that the ranges, as seen to the N.W. from the Darling, struck me as bearing a strong resemblance in appearance to those visible to the N.W. from the great south bend of the Murray River, and I thought they looked more connected than I expected to have found them. I omitted to state that, in travelling up the Darling, we found the feed for our horses generally very bad, and the deep muddy banks of the river rendered it very important to select an eligible place for the horses to drink at, to avoid their slipping in and getting drowned; whilst the strong tenacious character of the soil in the alluvial flats bordering upon the river caused it to open into deep holes and cracks, rendering it both difficult and dangerous to ride over them.

XI.—*Some Account of Peel River, N. America.* By Mr. A. K. ISBISTER, late H.H.B.C.'s service. Addressed to the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society.

SIR,—The interest with which the members of the Royal Geographical Society view all attempts to extend our knowledge of the new or unexplored regions of the earth, has induced me to lay